

TRIED & TESTED

We put the latest kit through its paces

Takacat Lite

£1,499 & Lehr 5hp engine £1,150

I've become a bit of a catamaran tender convert ever since I tested the brilliant little 4.0m C-Fury Patrol. The inherent stability and soft ride that a twin-hulled design delivers gives catamaran tenders a natural head start when it comes to ferrying passengers to and from the mothership.

The Takacat is a whole lot shorter (at 3.0m), lighter (31kg) and cheaper (£1,499 ex engine) than a C-Fury and therefore much closer to the kind of inflatable which most people use as a tender to a typical 30-50ft craft. To make the point Hypro Marine, the UK importers of Takacat, loaned me one for two weeks over the summer to use as the tender to my own boat. They also fitted it with one of their 5hp LEHR propane outboards so that I could experience the pros and cons of living with a gas-powered engine.

The boat is supplied in two separate bags, one for the hull and one for the high-pressure inflatable floor, which makes it a bit easier to carry, store and repack than cramming it all into a single big bag. As usual the hand pump and pressure gauge supplied as standard are next to useless so it's worth investing in a proper electric pump, such as Bravo's excellent

Superturbo BST. This aside, the set-up process is easy; you inflate the two aft chambers first, then the two forward ones before inserting the high-pressure air-deck and seat, which keeps the structure rigid.

The first thing to note is how stable the Takacat is. With both tubes set well apart and a large flat floor between, it's extremely easy to step into without upsetting the balance. The low, open bow means it's particularly good for nosing up to a beach and stepping off without getting your feet wet.

It's also easier to row than a monohull inflatable, partly because there is less drag (only the twin sponsons are immersed, not the central deck) and partly because the twin keels keep it tracking in a straight line. It also tows very well, resisting the tendency to swing from side to side over the mothership's wake.

Under power, it's an absolute hoot. At displacement speed it potters along very comfortably with three adults but with just one adult or two kids on board, it will start to plane even with a 5hp engine (it's rated up to 9.9hp). You'll need to get your weight forward but once up and running it zips along very nicely at 12-14 knots. In flat water it corners like a magnetic Scalextric



Low drag catamaran hull and 5hp engine proved a fun platform for young crew, and a practical one for the older members!

VALUE ★★★★★
RATING ★★★★★

car, generating far more grip than its size and speed would suggest.

I drove it all the way back from Studland to Poole Harbour through some quite choppy conditions, and the combination of the catamaran hull and inflatable air-deck took all the sting out of the waves. The open bow meant that I did catch a bit of spray and once or twice the propeller lifted out of the water but it was a whole lot more fun than most 3.0m inflatables in these conditions. A larger 3.4m model is also available that can carry up to five people and an engine up to 15hp.

The LEHR propane engine proved too stiff for my 12-year-old

son to start but with no leaky petrol tanks, air vents or fuel taps to worry about it made refuelling afloat a much cleaner, easier affair. The only downside is that there is no way of telling how much gas there is left in a partially used canister and with enthusiastic use you can burn through a full one in 30-40 mins – we got through seven of them in two weeks, which at £7 a pop begins to add up. If you owned one, you'd almost certainly want to invest in one of the bigger 6kg refillable tanks. In most other respects it was easy to use and an ideal companion to the Takacat. **Hugo Contact** www.hypromarine.com



It packs down into two carry bags for easy carrying and stowing



Takacat is light, fast, stable and easy to get on and off making it a fun and practical alternative to a monohull tender



High pressure inflatable floor provides rigidity and keeps your feet dry. Surprisingly, the open bow rarely takes on any water